





*Reprinted from "The Journal of Mental Science," Jan., 1894.*

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The death, on October 25th, of Dr. Kerlin, so well known, both in Europe and America, as the earnest and successful Superintendent of the Pennsylvania Institution for Feeble-Minded Children, removes from the scene of his labours one of the most energetic benefactors of the imbecile class.

Dr. Kerlin was born in New Jersey nearly sixty years ago. Early in his medical career he became interested in nervous diseases, and naturally drifted into the special line of study which led him to assume the position he so long held. After some years' service as Assistant Superintendent under Dr. Joseph Parrish, he succeeded that physician as Superintendent of the Pennsylvania Institution (then at Germanstown) in 1864. Year by year, under his judicious guidance, the institution grew and prospered; and from two small buildings, with less than 100 pupils, gradually developed the large establishment that now exists at Elwyn, which indeed may be designated a model village for the various classes of imbeciles, numbering in all upwards of 1,000. Here may be seen, picturesquely placed on wooded eminences, the several departments into which a large establishment for imbeciles groups itself, the central training school being the most prominent, and, subsidiary to this, at discreet distances, are found a hospital, a department for epileptics, and separate blocks for custodial cases of either sex. These several buildings are connected by means of a mule-car tramway, shares in which Dr. Kerlin used to suggest as a good investment to the benevolent! One of the special features of the beautiful grounds is the "Grove Tabernacle," where on summer evenings from 600 to 700 of the asylum family gather for Sabbath worship under the spreading forest trees. But the heart and soul of the organization was the good doctor himself. Living in the midst of the training-school building, he was ever devising some extension of the usefulness of the institution, and when at last he found that the limit of acquisition of suitable land at Elwyn had been reached, he busied himself in obtaining legislative sanction for the inauguration beyond the Alleghanies of a Western Pennsylvania Institution, where land could be had for 100 dollars per acre. The piloting of this Bill through the State Legislature was, indeed, almost his last public enterprise.

Notwithstanding his devotion to his own special work, he found time to take an active part in many philanthropic associations, and he was a prominent figure at the annual "Conferences of Charities and Correction." To these he contributed numerous excellent papers on such subjects as State provision for the mentally-feeble, for epileptics, and for moral imbeciles, a class concerning whom he was of late much exercised.

Though Dr. Kerlin has not personally written much of a strictly medical character, he was always ready to promote the scientific utilization of the mass of pathological material under his charge, and this has been recognized by Dr. Osler, of Baltimore, in his work on the "Cerebral Palsies of Children," the cases in which are largely derived from the institution at Elwyn. Dr. Kerlin's assistant, Dr. Wilmarth, has also published valuable contributions to the pathology of idiocy.

Since the deaths of Dr. Wilbur and Dr. Brown, of Barre, Dr. Kerlin has been the Nestor of the Medical Officers of American Institutions for the Feeble-Minded. Very worthily did he fill the Presidential chair of the Association of

such officers at their annual meeting in 1892. His address on that occasion is full of scientific information on new methods of treating idiocy (especially by surgical procedures), and of practical wisdom as regards institution organization. He insisted, with all the weight of his long experience, on the essentially medical character of all successful institutions for feeble-minded children. "I am unwilling to admit," he says, "that our work is any other than a medical philanthropy—a hospital was its birthplace and its cradle . . . It is our supineness, our lack of courage and faith, which shall yield this trust to other than medical men. . . . Every department of duty, whether official, domestic, farming, or labouring, should be made tributary to the elevation and instruction of the inmates; it is the pessimist—indeed, worse, the superficial and vapid reformer—that would venture to modify the directness and application of these principles. To rob the Superintendent of the garden and farm life of his boys is the same as to deprive the surgeon of his best instruments; to limit him to the avocation and direction of the schoolroom is to wither his right arm; to confine him to medical practice is to forget his broader relations to his patients in all their varying psychical moods and higher moral life; to restrict or abridge in the slightest his free movements of men, women, and material, is to ignore the many-sided aspects of his professional duty. Of course there must be faults and failures in any system, but 'any fool can find the faults; it is the wise man who can find the remedy.'"

As an example of Dr. Kerlin's skill and foresight in the details of institution management, it may be mentioned that in 1891 he published in book-form, under the title of "Manual of Elwyn," a collection of general rules and house orders which in many cases had been in force during the 27 years of his superintendentship. Yet he was no mere disciplinarian; his heart was full of love and sympathy for all who aided, however humbly, in the work of the Institution. In 1889 he showed signs of failing health, and his Board sent him for a six months' trip to Europe, from which, however, perhaps owing to excess of zeal in visiting institutions, he did not derive as much benefit as had been hoped. Notwithstanding his infirmities he did not flinch from his work, and although last year much depressed by the loss of his wife, who had been a true helpmate in all his enterprises, he gallantly struggled on to the last, and died in harness. Those who had the pleasure of making his acquaintance when visiting this country will appreciate the cheery spirit in which, though conscious of grave organic disease, he brought his Presidential Address to a close with the words of Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra"—

"Grow old along with me;  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life for which  
The first was made.  
Our times are in His hand  
Who saith, 'A whole I planned.'  
Youth shows but half; trust God,  
See all, nor be afraid."

G. E. S.







